



County Corner

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Flathead County Road & Bridge Departments

The Flathead County Road & Bridge Departments maintain approximately 1,100 miles of roads, over 5,000 signs, approximately 100 bridges, over 1,000 culverts and approximately 400 pieces of equipment.

Flathead County receives approximately 3.4% from property taxes. On the average each property owner pays approximately \$75.00 to the Road Department. If you figure diesel at \$3.00 per gallon, then each property tax pays for 25 gallons of fuel. Depending on the conditions during winter snow plowing and sanding, one grader can go through 100 gallons in one day.

We are dependent upon what Mother Nature does most of the year, from snow plowing to grading to mud holes. Grading gravel roads is anticipated three to four times a year. The road department currently has four water trucks, which have to serve 12 graders. To actually do a good job on the road, there should be in all



reality two water trucks for every grader.

From deep snows like the winter of 1996-1997 to freezing rain to slush, we try to do our best to keep the roads in a passable state. Everybody wishes we could plow and/or sand their road first, but we typically start with the roads adjacent to the cities and work our way out from there. The further from the cities you live, the longer it takes for the services to get to you.

As you can well imagine, our operation is severely affected by the price of oil. Along with the increases in the price of gas and diesel fuels, the cost of our asphalt and chip sealing oils are affected. This year alone, our chip seal oil increased by almost \$100 per ton. With the cost of oil increasing, this reduces the number of miles of road we can overlay and chip seal. From late spring to early fall, the Road Department tries to maintain the paved roads in the valley, by overlaying or chip sealing.

Overlaying a paved road is the process in which we spread a layer of asphalt over the existing asphalt to restore it to a better condition than broken asphalt and potholes. Roads need to have a new surface every so often to keep them in good "running" condition. With the increased number of vehicles and truck traffic on the roads, they deteriorate that much faster. Chip sealing is the process in which we apply a thin coat of oil then a layer of chips on top of one to two year old asphalt, in order to preserve and extend the wear life for a few more years.

Along with snow plowing, sanding, grading, paving, and chip sealing our maintenance duties include: brush cutting, ditching, approaches, flagging, hand & grader patching, encroachments and permits, rock raking, striping, sweeping,

signage, traffic counts, weight limits, emergency call out thru the Sheriff's Department, the MHP, Flathead County OES, plus minor road repairs, and numerous other activities. We are also proud to help the rural fire and emergency services with avalanche rescues, lost hikers and hunters, wild land and structure fires, flooding and numerous other emergency situations.

While trying to take care of all of these situations, our equipment needs to be kept in good working condition, which requires the services of a 12-man mechanic crew. They change the oil, rebuild engines, fabricate parts for older equipment, weld breaks, repair body damage, repair brakes and hydraulics, change tires, plus maintain vehicles for other county departments, such as the Sheriff's cars, Health Department and the Eagle Transit buses.

The Bridge Department enhances road operations by helping with snow plowing and sanding in the winter months, plus they repair or replace culverts, maintain cattle guards, replace or install guardrail, repair damage to roads caused by waterways such as creeks and underground springs, while still trying to replace one to two bridges a year.

Spring flooding and run off is a very busy time for them, from chasing water to flushing culverts that have been plugged up by debris from runoff or by beavers. In addition, they deal with trees and debris in rivers and creeks upstream that could potentially do damage to our many bridges.

The Road and Bridge Departments strive to do the best job possible for all residents in Flathead County, from the Canadian Border to Nirada, and from Thompson River to Essex, including Evergreen and twelve other unincorporated towns.

Flathead County Roads & Bridge Departments GUY A. FOY, Superintendent



Guy Foy is the current Superintendent of the Road and Bridge Departments with Ovila Byrd, Road Supervisor, Greg Iverson, Bridge Supervisor, Ted Gilbertson, Shop Supervisor, Patti Vernarsky, R/W Specialist, an office staff of four and the Road and Bridge Crews. His career with the Road and Bridge Departments started in 1974 and he has been enjoying the opportunity and challenge of overseeing these departments since February.

Guy Foy is a native of the valley and enjoys spending time with his daughter, Jessica and his son, Jonathan. Their favorite hobbies are music and outdoor recreation.

"We provide responsive and accountable services to protect and enhance the Flathead community."

— County Commissioners: Dale Lauman, Gary Hall & Joe Brenneman